

Keeping in Touch

News and notes from
the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches

February 1992

Australian DC Brings Broad Experience

By Rev. Kittredge Cherry

Rev. Greg Smith, the recently elected Australian District Coordinator, brings a variety of experience and ideas to his new position.

"On General Council, my Number One goal will be to increase awareness of the international nature of the church, and in Australia my aim is to encourage our church to become a truly *Australian* church as a proof of that international nature," he said. "I also want to overcome the fear of the church in the gay and lesbian community."

Rev. Smith was born and raised in Sydney, Australia, "smack in the middle of the Bible belt." His father was a Methodist minister.

As a teenager, Rev. Smith was asked to leave the church because of his gay sexuality, and his father left with him.



Rev. Greg Smith

"When my father left the Methodist church, he never went back in a church in his life," Greg said. "His relationship with God didn't change, though. I believe that if he were alive today, he'd be an MCC minister."

Another spiritual turning point came in 1971, when Rev.

Smith spent a year in the Air Force in Vietnam. "I went because it was going to be an adventure, and I spent a whole year terrified," he said. "I kicked God out good and properly. It was a matter of: How can God be alive with this death and pain and suffering?"

After returning to Australia, he spent many years on "sex, drugs and rock-n-roll" before attending MCC in 1984. "I experienced the blessedness of looking back and realizing that there was no time when God wasn't there," he recalled.

He became lay pastor of MCC Sydney while attending United Theological College as the first openly gay MCC member to attend seminary in Australia. During one six-month period, he buried 54 people, all of them people he knew from the gay community, all of their deaths caused by AIDS.

The stress of this experience contributed to Rev. Smith's decision to move last year for health reasons to Mudgee, a "very, very conservative Christian town" of 7,000 people in New South Wales. Rev. Smith himself is HIV-positive. He and his lover, Holland, generate their own electricity there from the sun and wind, and raise angora goats and chickens. In addition to his duties as district coordinator, Rev. Smith also runs a small company that installs solar houses.

In January 1991, Rev. Smith was invited back to conduct a friend's funeral at the Methodist church that was once his home. "I was able to go back there and stand in that church and conduct the funeral," he said with deep feeling. "I realized it wasn't God's church that had kicked us out---it was the people." □

North Carolina Council of Churches Supports UFMCC

The Executive Board of the North Carolina Council of Churches adopted a statement in December calling for lesbian and gay rights and dialogue with UFMCC.

The statement, which was approved by the board 17 to 3 at a meeting in Raleigh, says that the NC Council of Churches "confesses the complicity in the suffering of gay men and lesbians and seeks all appropriate means of dialogue with them and with church bodies such as the Metropolitan Community Churches of North Carolina, believing that understanding and respect come out of sharing in community and being in dialogue."

It also calls for vigorous prosecution of hate crimes against gay men and lesbians and civil rights, adding "sexual orientation" to

the list of protected classes of persons in anti-discrimination laws, and abolition of the state's Crimes Against Nature Law.

Mr. Wayne Lindsey, pastoral leader of St. John's MCC in Raleigh, said the primary author of the statement is Rev'd. Jimmy Creech, program associate to the council. Rev'd. Creech used to serve as convener of Raleigh Religious Network for Gay and Lesbian Equality, in which Mr. Lindsey is an active member.

The statement also notes that over the past four years North Carolina has led the United States in reported incidents of violence and harassment against lesbians and gay men, with more than 1,500 incidents in 1990 alone. □

February is World Church Extension Month
Please remember our sisters and brothers worldwide

Send Your Photos to "Keeping in Touch"

Keeping in Touch strives to present a full and accurate picture of what is happening throughout UFMCC. To do this, we need more photographs from readers.

The editorial board is especially interested in black-and-white photos that show people in action doing the work of the church. Professional photographers interested in working on assignment for *Keeping in Touch* are also invited to send samples of their work.

Please send your photos to: *Keeping in Touch*, 5300 Santa Monica Blvd., #304, Los Angeles, CA 90029. □

Christmas Services Draw Big Crowds

UFMCC churches across the globe celebrated Christmas 1991 with joy and thanksgiving.

More than 2,000 people attended two of UFMCC's largest Christmas Eve services, which were conducted by MCC Toronto, Canada, and Church of the Holy Spirit MCC in Ft. Lauderdale, FL.

About 2,200 attended the service at the Ft. Lauderdale church. All members were urged to invite friends to the service. Rev. Grant Ford, pastor, estimated that 35 percent of the congregation consisted of heterosexual visitors.

Rev. Brent Hawkes, pastor of the Toronto church, said that the Christmas eve congregation numbered 2,643, about 400 more people than the previous year. This was believed to be the largest Christmas Eve service in the city. □

Churches Celebrate Lesbian and Gay Love on Valentine's Day

Valentine's Day provides an opportunity for churches to celebrate lesbian and gay love.

The Northeast District newsletter offers a reminder: "As Valentine's Day approaches, let us remember and teach our congregations that long-term gay and lesbian relationships exist -- indeed, right in our midst."

MCC Toronto, Canada is doing just that with a Blessing of Relationships ceremony on Feb. 16. It will become an annual event on the Sunday closest to Valentine's Day.

Chicago Church has "Miracle Sunday"

Good Shepherd Parish MCC, Chicago, IL, raised \$16,000 on Jan. 5 when Rev. Ralph Conrad, pastor, declared a "miracle Sunday."

"The idea came out of a brainstorming session at a board meeting," Rev. Conrad said. "I consider that to be a real movement of the Holy Spirit."

The miracle Sunday celebration began with the regular 9 a.m. service, then continued throughout the day with worship, in which different people led periods of discussion, dramatic readings, music, anointing, and communion. Snacks were available throughout the day, as was an open bowl for special offerings. It concluded with the regular 7 p.m. service.

The offering will be used to retire old debts and move the church toward its long-range plans, Rev. Conrad said. □

Southwest District Conference Gives Approval

A variety of new church efforts were approved at the Southwest District Conference in November.

The District Committee approved a request for chartered church status from Gentle Shepherd MCC, Phoenix, AZ. It extended commissioned church status to Sunrise MCC of the Hi Desert, Palmdale, CA.

The District Committee also approved a new special work called Victory Ministries. One of the primary aims of this new work is a street ministry to people of color and people with AIDS in southern California. □



Keeping in Touch is a monthly publication of the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches. We are a church of the lesbian and gay community, open to all. Our mission is to call people to new life through the liberating gospel of Jesus Christ, confront injustice through Christian social action, and create a community of healing and reconciliation.

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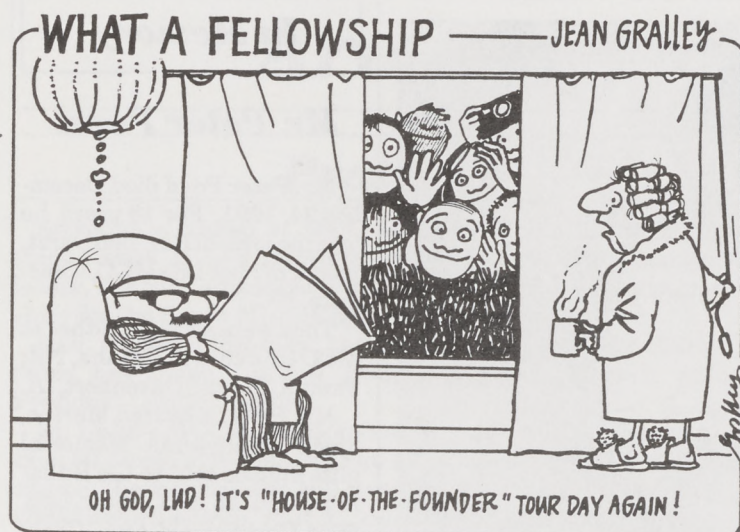
Send address changes, news and ideas to: *Keeping in Touch*, 5300 Santa Monica Blvd., #304, Los Angeles, CA 90029; (213) 464-5100.

Editorial Board:

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Director of Administration
Rev. Kittredge Cherry,
Editor

Deadline for each issue: 15th of previous month.

Ms. Nancy Fackrell, Typesetting



A bus tour of UFMCC historic sites is part of Samaritan College's Orientation to MCC Pastoring, a requirement for clergy licensing. The tour includes a house in Huntington Park, CA, where Rev. Elder Troy Perry lived and held the first worship service on Oct. 6, 1968.

CCCC Handles Available Clergy List

Beginning Jan. 1, the Clergy Credentials and Concerns Committee (CCCC) office assumed responsibility for the available clergy list. All requests for this list as well as requests to be placed on this list should be addressed to Mr. Gene L. Van Horn, in care of the CCCC office. Please note, however, that the vacant pulpit list is still handled by the UFMCC administrative office and requests for this list should be addressed to Ms. Nancy Fackrell. □

Ft. Myers Church Buys Building

St. John the Apostle MCC, Ft. Myers, FL, bought a church building in mid-December and held its first service there Christmas Eve.

"This is an historic moment as we celebrate both the birth of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and the dawn of a new era with the first MCC worship service in our very own building," Rev. Jim Lynch, pastor, wrote in his December newsletter.

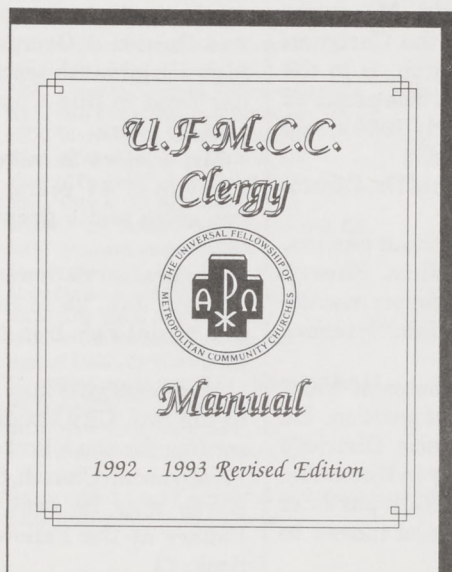
The church raised \$12,000 in four weeks to purchase the centrally located property, which includes two buildings with a sanctuary that seats 125. They assumed a mortgage and took out a second mortgage.

"Driving along Broadway in the early evening hours, you can't help being impressed by a large illuminated cross at the corner of Unity," the church's newsletter said. "The miracle is that this cross is the landmark for our new church building." □

Clergy Licensure Time Nears

The Clergy Credentials and Concerns Committee (CCCC) office reminds all clergy who will be seeking initial licensure or renewing their license that they should be sending the appropriate recommendations and evaluations to those persons involved. The deadline for these applications is March 1. All materials must be received by the CCCC office by this date. Application forms from the 1990-91 edition of the Clergy Manual are acceptable. □

1992-93 UFMCC Clergy Manual Available Now!



This manual offers complete information for those persons seeking licensure in the UFMCC. It also contains current polity information for those persons already licensed or ordained. A third section offers complete guidelines for District Clergy Review Committee and ordination interviews. This manual is a must for any persons licensed or seeking to be licensed, as well as any congregation seeking clergy information.

This manual is available from UFMCC Church Services for U.S.\$45, which includes shipping and handling. {For delivery in California, add 8 1/4 % sales tax.}

UFMCC Leaders at AIDS Services

UFMCC was represented at a wide variety of worship services commemorating World AIDS Day, Dec. 1.

Two notable services occurred in Bournemouth, England, and Atlanta, GA.

Rev. Jay Neely, Gulf Lower Atlantic District Coordinator, participated in the AIDS Interfaith Service in Atlanta. The message was delivered by Archbishop Desmond Tutu, and several bishops of other denominations attended, along with the Catholic Archbishop.

Rev. Neil Thomas, pastor of MCC Bournemouth, was invited to bring intercession on World AIDS Day to a Roman Catholic church in Bournemouth in the presence of the bishop and a congregation of 250. He was one of only three non-Catholic clergy chosen to participate in the ecumenical service. □

Corrections

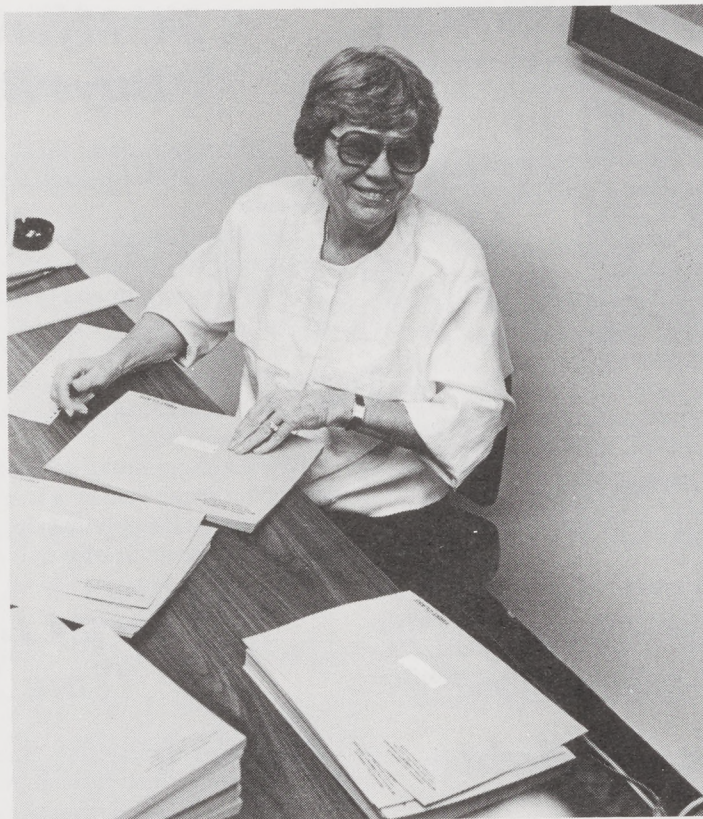
The next Gulf Lower Atlantic District Conference will be May 1-3. The date was listed incorrectly.

MCC of the Gentle Shepherd, which was third on the per capita tithes list for October 1991, is in Vancouver, WA. Its location was listed incorrectly. □

Positions Available

MCC Key West is looking for a full-time Assistant Pastor. For more information, contact: Rev. Steven M. Torrence, 1215 Petronia Street, Key West, FL 33040; (305) 294-8912.

MCC of Calgary Alberta Canada, announces a pastoral vacancy in one of the two Calgary congregations. For information contact: Pastoral Search Comm. MCC Calgary, 29 Cornell Road NW, Calgary, Alberta, Canada T2K 1V6. □



One of the most important people working on Keeping in Touch is Ms. D.J. Bowling. Every month Ms. Bowling does the collating, labelling, stuffing and mailing for Keeping in Touch, as well as many other UFMCC mailings. Ms. Bowling has been attending MCC Los Angeles, CA, since 1969, and joined the Fellowship staff in 1990. She is pictured here in the new mailroom that was recently added to the Fellowship offices as part of an expansion and renovation program now underway.

Transitions

Rev. Steve Moore became associate pastor of MCC in the Valley, N. Hollywood, CA, on Jan. 1.

MCC Providence, RI, has a new interim pastor, **Rev. Richard Matera**.

MCC of Wichita Falls, TX, has elected **Rev'd. Margaret Walker** as pastor. Rev'd. Walker, ordained in the Christian Church and recognized in the Presbyterian Church, is in the process of transferring her credentials to UFMCC. She pastored MCCs in Lawton, OK, and Midland, TX, in the early 1980's, and has been serving as interim pastor in Wichita Falls.

MCC Greenville, SC, affirmed the appointment of **Dr. Chuck Lippy** as pastoral leader.

In order to provide concrete help to missions without pastors, the Northeast District Committee appointed **Rev. Sherry Kennedy**, assistant district coordinator, to serve for six months as a circuit-riding pastor for MCC churches in Buffalo, Syracuse and Albany, NY.

Rev. Bob Galloway will leave his post as pastor of MCC Knoxville, TN, on May 1, after seven years in that position. He will continue as part of the Gulf Lower Atlantic District's ministry while he works for a religious community in Knoxville.

Rev. Kathleen Williams has resigned as assistant pastor of **Good Samaritan Parish MCC**, Toledo, OH, and moved to Knoxville, TN. □

In Memory

Mr. Peter Pond

Mr. Peter Pond died December 24, 1991. For 18 years, he was the lover of Rev. Bob Darst, pastor of New Life MCC, Charlotte, NC.

They were active together at MCC churches in Omaha, NE; Tampa, FL; and Davenport, IA.

Mr. Pond, a retired Marine, died of emphysema. Memorial gifts may be sent to the Building Fund at MCC New Life, 2644 Chesterfield Ave., Charlotte, NC 28205.

Mr. Richard S. Pieters

Mr. Richard S. Pieters, 81, died Jan. 24 in Sun City, AZ, of chronic leukemia. He was the father of Rev. Steve Pieters, UFMCC Field Director of AIDS Ministry.

Mr. Pieters supported UFMCC in many ways and was a major financial contributor to UFMCC's AIDS Ministry. Many UFMCC members will remember how he and his wife tapped Rev. Pieters on the head with a magic wand as a part of his ordination ceremony at the 1987 General Conference.

Born and raised in Korea as the son of Presbyterian missionaries, Mr. Pieters graduated from Princeton University and taught at Phillips Academy Andover, where he was President George Bush's high school math teacher. He has lived in Sun City for the past 10 years.

Mr. Pieters is survived by his wife of 44 years, Norma; two sons; and a granddaughter.

Funeral services were scheduled for Jan. 26 in Sun City, and burial Feb. 8 in Andover, MA.

Memorial gifts may be made to the Sun City Studio of Recording for the Blind or Faith Presbyterian Church, Sun City. Cards may be sent to Rev. Pieters at the Fellowship offices. □

Around The Fellowship

Praises

Attendance tripled at **MCC Gulfcoast**, Biloxi, MS, at its second week in new quarters. **Rev. Jim Becker**, pastoral leader, has been appointed the information and public relations chair for the South Mississippi AIDS Task Force.

Rev. Richard Mickley, pastor of **MCC Manila**, the Philippines, has joined a prayer group that meets regularly with President Corazon Aquino.

St. Luke's MCC in Jacksonville, FL, reports that it has more than 30 people in its class for new members. When they join the church, the membership will surpass 180. The church has also added a third service, started renovating the second building on its property, and received record offerings. **Rev. Frankye White**, pastor, created this theme for the year: "We've got a lot to do in '92."

Rev. W.W. Hargrave, pastor of **Christ Alive MCC**, Vancouver, BC, Canada, reports dramatic improvement at the church since a recent move to facilities with more space and wheelchair accessibility.

The theater department at **MCC of Greater Kansas City**, MO, did a production of "Godspell" that was named the best amateur production of 1991 in Kansas City by *The Current News*, a local newspaper. **Rev. John Barbone**, pastor, reports that the church's most successful ministry is Potter's House, a coffeehouse that provides an alternative to the bars on Sunday evenings; average attendance is 188.

New Life MCC, Charlotte, NC, ended 1991 with a budget surplus for the first time in its eight-year history. **Rev. Bob Darst**, pastor, attributes this landmark to the congregation's "commitment."

A Russian activist spoke at **MCC Long Beach**, CA, on Dec. 22 about the struggles of the gay and lesbian movement in Russia. Mr. Roman Kalinin of Moscow is the founder of the first gay and lesbian organization and publication in Russia. **MCC Long**

Beach received a love offering of \$858 for him and his work. He was also very excited by the news of **MCC in Warsaw**, Poland.

Mr. Alan Robertson, lay pastor of **Sunrise MCC of the Hi Desert**, Palmdale, CA, was asked to help write a mission statement for an ecumenical group that has started in an effort to answer the county's harsh fundamentalism.

First MCC of Atlanta, GA, celebrated its 20th anniversary in January with the return of its founding pastor, **Rev. John Gill**. The church is now pastored by **Rev. Reid Christensen**.

MCC Corpus Christi, TX, celebrates its 10th anniversary in February.

Rev. Dee Dale, pastor of **MCC Louisville**, KY, has been elected president of the Community Health Trust. It has a \$250,000 budget to provide health care services for the gay and lesbian community and all persons living with AIDS.

Ms. Sherri Pickel became the first graduate of Samaritan College to use her bachelor's degree in theology to be accepted in a master's program. She graduated from Ryokan College in January 1992 with a master's degree in counseling psychology. Ryokan College in Los Angeles, CA, is a state-approved college and is not eligible for federal or state funds. □

Prayers

Rev. Joe Whitley of St. Petersburg, FL, requests prayers for his family following the death of his father Dec. 4 and a major heart attack suffered by his brother.

One of the most difficult decisions is to close a church. **MCC** churches that have closed recently include: **New Covenant MCC**, Walnut, CA; **MCC of the Redwoods**, Larkspur, CA; and **Whitewater Valley MCC**, Richmond, IN. All who served at these churches deserve to be thanked. Pray that God's blessing will enable UFMCC to resurrect these works in the future. □

Top 20 Tithes - December 1991

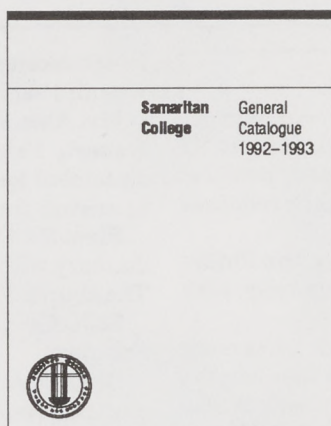
1.	Church/Holy Spirit MCC, Ft Lauderdale, FL	US\$	4,243.95
2.	MCC of the Resurrection, Houston, TX		2,739.63
3.	MCC Long Beach, Long Beach, CA		2,604.55
4.	MCC Toronto, Toronto, Ontario, Canada	CAN\$	2,509.21
5.	MCC San Francisco, San Francisco, CA		2,440.30
6.	MCC Washington, Washington, DC		2,426.28
7.	First MCC of Kansas, Wichita, KS		2,276.19
8.	King of Peace MCC, St Petersburg, FL		1,634.08
9.	River City MCC, Sacramento, CA		1,608.90
10.	MCC in the Valley, North Hollywood, CA		1,449.15
11.	MCC Augusta, Augusta, GA		1,225.24
12.	Las Vegas MCC, Las Vegas, NV		1,166.68
13.	Holy Covenant MCC, Hinsdale, IL		1,103.29
14.	MCC Key West, Key West, FL		1,096.97
15.	MCC of the Rockies, Denver, CO		1,066.88
16.	Agape' MCC, Ft Worth, TX		1,058.97
17.	Church of our Savior MCC, Boca Raton, FL		994.00
18.	St. Luke's MCC, Jacksonville, FL		976.14
19.	MCC New York, New York, NY		937.38
20.	MCC New Haven, New Haven, CT		875.94

(These figures reflect the 10 percent of each local church's income that is reported to Fellowship headquarters)

Top 20 Per Capita - December 1991

1.	MCC Ottawa, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada	CAN\$	48.02
2.	MCC Augusta, Augusta, GA	US\$	43.14
3.	MCC Santa Cruz, Santa Cruz, CA		28.91
4.	MCC of the Disciples, Washington, DC		28.90
5.	MCC Mt. Vernon, Mt. Vernon, WA		28.75
6.	Christ the King MCC, Oklahoma City, OK		24.02
7.	MCC Rockville, Rockville, MD		23.79
8.	Church of the Resurrection MCC, Chicago, IL		22.08
9.	MCC in Charlottesville, Charlottesville, VA		20.86
10.	MCC of Northern Virginia, Falls Church, VA		20.55
11.	Holy Covenant MCC, Hinsdale, IL		19.70
12.	MCC Long Beach, Long Beach, CA		19.51
13.	Faith Eternal MCC, Springfield, IL		19.45
14.	MCC San Jose, San Jose, CA		19.16
15.	Open Arms MCC, Rochester, NY		18.91
16.	MCC Living Spring, Eureka Springs, AR		18.45
17.	Angel of Hope MCC, Green Bay, WI		18.38
18.	Redeemer MCC of Flint, Flint, MI		17.71
19.	Christ the Redeemer MCC, Evanston, IL		17.11
20.	New Spirit MCC, Cincinnati, OH		17.10

Here's the other book that can change your life.



Samaritan College announces the 1992-1993 General Catalog, the first published comprehensive resource of all the college's courses of study, policies and procedures.

The most valuable product Samaritan College can give to the denomination is information--and the catalog provides just that--the avenues of education and resources to equip people of faith.

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There's just one catch.

We'd love to send you our catalog, and we will--as soon as we have your support to print the completed manuscript. Samaritan College is conducting a \$20,000 campaign this February to publish this resource and to continue our national and international programs. But first, we must acquire the computer equipment and software to make it possible.

Help us meet the challenge. Remember, the most valuable product Samaritan College can give you and the denomination is knowledge. *And this knowledge can change your life.*

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